

An albino Gatekeeper *Pyronia tithonus britanniae* Verity ab. *albinotica* Goodson (Lep.: Nymphalidae)

The butterfly recorder soon becomes familiar with the species in their local area, and it is unusual to see a butterfly that does not fit into any of the known categories. While recording in grid square SP 4839 in Northamptonshire on 6 August 2000, I was therefore surprised to see in the distance a medium-sized, pale orange-brown butterfly that I could not identify. Its colouring somewhat resembled a Small Heath, but it was too big and in the wrong habitat. Fortunately, it settled by the side of the track and allowed an examination and a few photographs before flying over the hedge. It proved to be an albino Gatekeeper (Plate E) where the normal deep brown colouring was replaced by pinkish-buff, while the orange portions retained their usual colour, and



Plate E. Albino Gatekeeper *Pyronia tithonus britanniae* Verity ab. *albinotica* Goodson. Northamptonshire. 6.viii.2000. Photograph © Chris Tyler-Smith

appears to be an example of ab. *albinotica* Goodson. This was one out of 3,315 Gatekeepers recorded between 1997 and 2000. Such aberrations are rare; previously, ab. *albinotica* has only been reported on a few occasions: Sussex in 1897 (South, 1960 ed., *The Butterflies of the British Isles*); Salisbury in 1933 (Frohawk, 1938, *Varieties of British Butterflies*, plate 8 fig 1); and North Devon in 1938 (Howarth, 1973, *South's British Butterflies*, plate 41 no 9). It is therefore a pleasure to obtain a photograph of such a butterfly in its wild state.— CHRIS TYLER-SMITH, Northview, North Lane, Weston-on-the-Green, Bicester, Oxon OX25 3RG.